



ADHD



About 1 in 21 Canadians live with ADHD. That's about 1.8 million Canadians! (1)

WHAT IS ADHD? ?



ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders in Canada.

People with ADHD experience a wide range of symptoms, commonly including more difficulty than the average person with regulating their attention or focus. This can show up as issues with staying focused, difficulty switching focus, struggling to prioritize focus when there is something more stimulating around, and being hyper-focused on something engaging. Some people with ADHD experience hyperactivity, which shows up as restlessness, the need to move, or the inability to stop talking or fidgeting. People with ADHD also tend to have difficulties regulating their emotions. (1)

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

Many people with undiagnosed ADHD aren't aware of their symptoms, since they feel normal to them. Someone with ADHD might have problems focusing, feel the urge to move from one thing to another, and may struggle to be organized or remember things. Some people with ADHD may take more risks and be more likely to act without thinking.

People with undiagnosed ADHD might feel lazy or unmotivated, and many end up feeling not as intelligent or capable as their peers, though in truth having ADHD has nothing to do with a person's intelligence. Often someone with ADHD knows what they should be doing, but may feel unable to do it.

It's important to know that ADHD can present very differently depending on the type and the person, and one person's symptoms can change throughout the day, or even from day to day. (1,2,3)

TIME BLINDNESS

Time blindness is a common feature of ADHD, which is when someone has a difficult time sensing, estimating and tracking time in real life. A few common consequences of this is losing track of time, underestimating how long something will take, or feeling like you have lots of time to accomplish something until you suddenly don't.



As with many ADHD symptoms, it's not an issue of "not caring enough", it's just a reflection of a brain that struggles with attention and executive functioning, and a brain that tends to focus better on the here-and-now rather than the future consequences of actions.

People with ADHD often find that supports like alarms, timers and visual schedules can help them keep track of timing. (4)



MANAGING TASKS

Many people with ADHD find it difficult to start or finish tasks, especially if they find the task boring or difficult. People with ADHD tend to find tasks with added obstacles, multiple steps or requiring extra effort to be especially challenging.

When starting a task, it may help someone with ADHD to divide it into small steps, making the first step very easy to help gain momentum. Or to set a timer to put effort into a task for 5 minutes before allowing themselves to stop - they may find that once they've started, it's easier to keep going! Or, if they are really struggling to start, choosing the most engaging step and starting there first.

Working with a body double (someone in your space who is working on their own task while you work on yours) is often extremely helpful. And when trying to stay on top of tasks, relying on memory may not be helpful - lists, timers and reminders can help someone with ADHD to stay on track.

Some days, someone with ADHD might feel like they have less capacity. That's fairly common with ADHD! Creating a minimum effort version of routines can help - then, once they're feeling better they can restart their regular routine without guilt or shame. (6)



SLEEP

Sleep - especially getting to sleep - can be challenging for someone with ADHD. But finding ways to improve sleep can help with attention, impulse control, motivation, emotion regulation and task initiation. A helpful starting point: try to wake up at the same time most days. This matters even more than sleep duration on its own!

When possible, avoid stimulating input one to two hours before sleep, like phone scrolling, gaming or watching intense shows. Try to avoid caffeine in the afternoons and evenings, since caffeine can last 6-10+ hours in your body and impair sleep. If after 30 minutes you still can't sleep, get up and do something calm, then try again. (5)

TREATMENT



A good first step is to get assessed for ADHD, if you haven't already. Next, a Registered Clinical Counsellor who specializes in ADHD can help support you in understanding how ADHD shows up in your life, develop practical strategies for attention and organization, improve emotional regulation, reduce overwhelm and self-criticism, and strengthen daily functioning at home, work or school. Connecting with a family physician can also help with ongoing medical support, including discussing whether medication may be appropriate as part of a broader ADHD treatment plan.



LOVED ONES

If you care for someone with ADHD, it's important to know that their symptoms aren't about "not trying hard enough" or being lazy or uncaring, but rather about neurological differences in attention regulation, impulse control and executive functioning. (In other words, it's not a motivation or an effort problem.) Setting up external supports for them like clear routines, reminders and breaking tasks into steps can really support someone with ADHD. This kind of support can really help with follow-through and reducing shame.

MORE INFORMATION

1. <https://caddac.ca/about-adhd/>
2. https://caddac.ca/wp-content/uploads/What-You-Need-to-Know-About-ADHD_Final-2.pdf
3. <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-in-adults>
4. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6556068/>
5. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health/adhd-and-sleep>
6. <https://www.caddra.ca/clinical-implications-of-the-perception-of-time-in-attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd-a-review/>

CONTACT US

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24/7 HELP LINES - PHONE

1-800-SUICIDE	1-800-784-2433
Crisis Line / Mental Health Support	310-6789 (no area code needed)
Fraser Health Crisis Line	604-951-8855
Kids Help Line (BC)	310-1234 (no area code needed)
Kids Help Line (Canada)	1-800-668-6868
KUU-US Crisis Line (Aboriginal)	1-800-588-8717
VictimLink	1-800-563-0808
Youth Against Violence Line	1-800-680-4264
Child Protection Services BC	1-800-663-9122

PAIN AGENCIES

Pain BC	painbc.ca	+1 844-430-0818
People in Pain Network	pipain.com	info@pipain.com
The Chronic Pain Network	cpn-rdc.ca	(905) 525-9140 ext. 27359
Self-Management British Columbia	selfmanagementbc.ca	1-866-902-3767

SUBSTANCE USE HELP

Alcohol and Drug Resources	604-660-9382
Pacific Community Resource Society	604-836-6273
Deltassist (North Delta)	604-594-3455
Deltassist (Ladner & Tsawwassen)	604-946-9526
Alcoholics Anonymous	604-434-3933
Narcotics Anonymous	604-873-1018

MENTAL WELLBEING APPS

BoosterBuddy
Calm
Headspace
Mindshift
MyLife